



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2015

No. 53

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. NEWHOUSE).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 14, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DAN NEWHOUSE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

BRING OUR TROOPS HOME FROM AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I am back on the floor today because, while we were home during the Easter break, there was a tragedy in Afghanistan that largely escaped the national news.

On April 8, Army medic John Dawson was shot and killed and eight other Americans were wounded by an Afghan soldier who opened fire on them. This tragedy is yet another example of the American blood spilled in Afghanistan.

Sadly, this kind of tragedy, an American soldier being killed by a supposed Afghan ally, is nothing new. The poster I have with me today is a picture of two little girls, Eden and Stephanie, who lived in my district for a time.

Their father, Sergeant Kevin Balduf, who was stationed at Camp Lejeune in my district, died in May of 2011 in Afghanistan, along with Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Palmer, who also was stationed in my district at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point.

They were shot by an Afghan policeman they were training. The night before Sergeant Balduf died, he emailed his wife, Amy, and he said:

I don't trust them. I don't trust them. I don't trust any of them.

The next day, he was killed.

Mr. Speaker, last December, when Congress passed final appropriations for fiscal year 2015, it provided \$4.1 billion for the Afghan National Security Forces and additional funding for development assistance. This is more money than the Afghan Government generates in a year.

The special inspector general for Afghan reconstruction, John Sopko, regularly produces reports of the rampant waste, fraud, and abuse of American taxpayer dollars in Afghanistan; yet we in Congress continue to spend billions in Afghanistan. To what end? Why are we going to spend billions of dollars and have troops in Afghanistan for 9 more years—for 9 more years, Mr. Speaker?

As Roger Simon, an editor with Politico, said in October 2014:

If you spent 13 years pounding money down a rathole with little to show for it, you might wake up one morning and say: "Hey, I'm going to stop pounding money down this rathole." The United States Government wakes up every morning and says: "The rathole is looking a little empty today. Let's pound a few more billion dollars down there."

Mr. Speaker, that is sad for the American taxpayer who, tomorrow,

many of the American taxpayers will pay their taxes to the Federal Government; and we, in Congress, will continue to take their tax money and spend billions over in Afghanistan with very little accountability for the American taxpayer. That is unacceptable.

When you look at the limbs and the death that is going on in Afghanistan, you wonder why someone, years ago, said that Afghanistan is the graveyard of empires. Yes, Mr. Speaker, America is headed for the graveyard in Afghanistan. I don't understand my colleagues in Congress.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to bring our troops home from Afghanistan once and for all. We have wasted billions of dollars and spilled so much American blood in a futile attempt to save a fractured country from itself. Afghanistan is truly the graveyard of empires that I just mentioned. It is time for Congress to lead the way and end our presence in Afghanistan.

May God continue to bless our men and women in uniform, and may God continue to bless America.

FREE AMIR HEKMATI NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to bring up the case of my constituent, a young man by the name of Amir Hekmati. He is an American citizen, born and raised in the United States, grew up in my home town of Flint, Michigan, and served in the United States Marine Corps. He is a brother; he is a son.

Three and a half years ago, he traveled to Iran. His parents are of Iranian descent. He traveled to Iran to meet for the first time a grandmother that he had never seen, traveled under his own name, notified the government that he was going.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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